RECONSTRUCTION VIRTUES

Thomas F. Burke, C.S.P.

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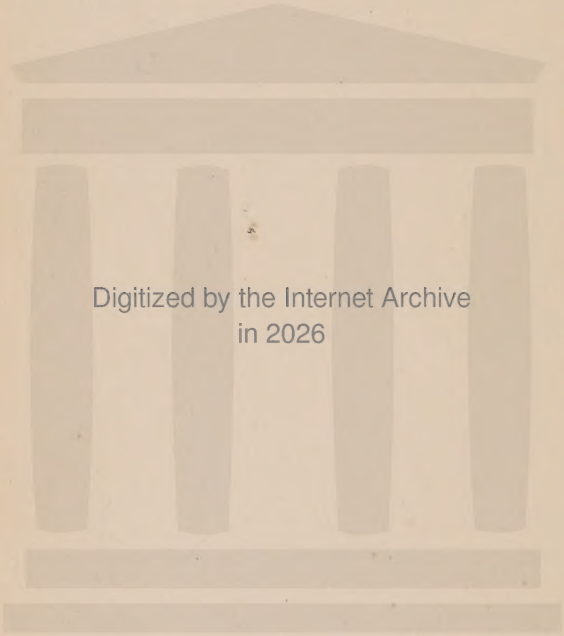

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RECONSTRUCTION VIRTUES

WITHDRAWN

An Advent Course of Sermons, Proposing Christian Remedies for Present Chaotic Social Conditions Drawn from the Store Room of the Mother of Civilization— The Catholic Church.

By
THOMAS F. BURKE, C.S.P.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The following discourses were delivered as an Advent Course. Particularly as such they have their permanent value; for unless Christ come and receive an abiding place in the hearts of men all our plans of reconstruction are vain.

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Reconstruction Virtues

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

CONFIDENCE

"Look up and lift up your heads because your redemption is at hand."—Luke xxi. 28.

E are today face to face with a crisis in the history of the world. Now, as at various times in the past, civilization is seriously in peril and all the nobler forces in life are summoned to its salvation. Now, too, as in those other days, it is almost the obvious and natural thing to seek remedies where they have hitherto been found, namely, in the Catholic Church, the Mother of Civilization. It was the Religion of Christ that remade the Roman Empire in the course of three centuries, replacing pagan culture and pagan immorality with the teaching

and the virtue of Christ. Later, when the northern conquerors overcame Rome, it was this Religion that stood as the one counterpoise to brute force and molded even the victors to the shape of Christian manhood. When, in that period known as the time of the Renaissance, the whole European world was threatened with the return to paganism, the one effective champion of Christian morality and the one force which saved human society from retrogression was the Catholic Church. When, in the time of the Protestant revolution, millions were lost to her and departed from her standards, that Church still retained her integrity and continued to be the supreme guide to mankind. So we say it is the natural thing to turn now to that same Mother of Civilization for remedies in our time of need; remedies that were left in this treasure-house by Him Whose coming into the world is commemorated during the season of Advent. May we not then, in this day, and under the benign guidance of this Holy Mother, offer of her many treasures to a needy

world and call with her sure voice to a wandering people?

We should be blind, did we not realize the present danger. Civilization itself, our boasted structure, built upon the toil and sweat and thought of centuries, is threatened with destruction. Old wrongs are clamoring for relief. The political, economic, personal grievances that injustice engendered for ages are now crying out for redress. For centuries the sufferers have borne the yoke, but the World War, with its terrible realities and its drastic consequences, has snapped the outworn patience of the people. They feel that now is the time for gaining justice—or never. They have settled into a reckless mood. They welcome anything in the way of change and are ready for any novelty, convinced that it cannot but better the conditions of the present.

Nor is this state of mind altogether unintelligible, especially when we remember that it springs largely from conclusions based upon economic considerations. This readiness to seize whatever is offered or suggested

as a panacea becomes the more conceivable when we bring to mind that, because of the intrusion into society of modern machinery methods of production and distribution, vast readjustments have been long needed and long overdue. Delay has developed such ugly symptoms as the dire problems of the big city, the desertion of rural homes, a general restlessness, a nation-wide and world-wide gregariousness with sheep-like disposition to follow, without thinking, any self-constituted leader. All these tendencies have weakened the safeguards of society and opened the door for the impudent self-assertion of murderers and wasters, anti-social elements that are never altogether eliminated from civilization, but are, in normal times, submerged.

The seriousness of this condition is still more emphasized on the other hand because over-long and overmuch prosperity has withdrawn to private pursuits the intelligence and moral force of the community without which no form of government can prosper. Instead of the best minds

in society being devoted to the interests and welfare of the community, they have been concerned principally with their own individual development and their own personal gain. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, and in this aspect, it is especially necessary. For want of it, governments in many countries, sometimes even our own constitutional government, have entered on evil ways and have incurred the contempt and animosity of the public. We witness the consent of the governed withdrawn more and more from existing governments, tempting those in power to arbitrary use of that power and tempting the masses to revolution. Such is practically a world-wide condition today.

The gravity of this lamentable condition is doubled by the lack of real leadership. We expected leadership on the world's stage a year ago. The events which then took place, the ending of the War, the reaction of a whole world justified us in hoping that those who were most intimately connected with the achievement of

victory would stand out as prominent and righteous guides to the majority of mankind. All to whom we then looked with hope have failed us. This is true in the field of politics. It is also true in the more important field of philosophic thought. No mind stands out in dominating influence. No master sounds the call from the battlements of truth. Weak prophets and false prophets are numerous, but no man able enough and strong enough to lead commands the discipleship of the world. That world listens in vain for the unselfish but compelling voice. In minor and less vital interests, as well as in the broader and higher realms, the same lack of leadership exists and fatal consequences follow in the train of this emptiness. We see this everywhere. Employer, employee, the profiteers, the reformers, the press, the police, the very fabric of our Government, all are racked by racing, feverish activity, yet purposeless, leaderless and mutually harmful.

In the midst of it all, the most startling symptom of our present

peril is that everybody expects a proximate cataclysm, and yet the majority are passively awaiting for it to happen, without plans or preparation or provisions against the rigors of the visitation. We have an example of this in the case of Russia, where the really capable and progressive manufacturing business class allowed their well-organized business to be wrested from their nerveless and unresisting hands. And this phenomenon is familiar in history, as we witness, for example, in the account, given by Josephus, of the supine submission of Jerusalem before its destruction. There has come upon many, a sense of fatalistic conviction that nothing can be done, and that human society must only wait expectantly and make the best of whatever catastrophe may be impending. This condition of mind is evident in many parts of the world today. It is evident here in America as well. Its name is *hopelessness.*

Yes, if we confine our view to earth, if we gauge all things by merely human standards, if we put all our reli-

ance upon the solutions that are offered by the votaries of purely material interests, then indeed shall we face a wall of black chaos and gaze in vain into the darkness. Hope has gone out of the heart of the world. It staggers beneath the dread burden of despair; it gropes uncertainly, vaguely, grasping nothing. It is bowed down, dazed and stunned and bewildered. And lo! from out the heavens comes the one voice of hope: "Look up and lift up your heads because your redemption is at hand."

Over against human hopelessness the Catholic Faith proclaims the heavenly remedy of confidence; confidence not in the things of earth, but the things of heaven; confidence not in the power of man, but in the power of God; confidence that means resignation to the decrees of God and conformity to the Will of God. In splendor stands out the truth that God has care over us; that our God is a Providential God. Not only Divine Power, which finds its expression in the creation of all things; not only Divine Intelligence, which manifests itself in

the law and order of the universe, but Divine Love also supposes this providence. In the light of reason, through the dictates of conscience, in the proclamation of His all holy law, His sovereign will, in the voices of the patriarchs and prophets, God has always sought to bind men round with the cords of love. That same Divine Love which impelled the Father to send upon earth His only-begotten Son for the salvation of man, is ready to-day to answer the cries of need that go up from our heart. The response to this providence of God is, on the part of man, confidence in Him and in His works. This confidence is, therefore, a supernatural virtue. Its strong foundation is Faith, absolute faith in God's existence and providence. Its essence is absolute surrender of man's will to God's will. It is a conviction unshakeable that, come what may, God rules the world: that, no matter how chaotic, how hopeless, how bewildering the conditions of the times may seem, there is One Who can bring order out of chaos and life out of death. That man who

is blessed with this virtue holds his head among the stars and, though his feet may walk the troubled and littered earth, in his heart there ever remains a serenity, a peace, of which nothing can rob him, yea, a feeling of victory, however strong may seem the forces of evil about him.

In no sense does this confidence in God, this reliance upon Him, this resignation to His Will, mean apathy or lethargy or inactivity. Rather it invites and inspires and demands action, because it eliminates all deadening fear that can alone paralyze the hand and numb the brain. Its very companion and colleague is courageous action, for it means doing the will of God. It means seeking the fulfillment of God's commands in the high morality of our daily life, seeking the will of God in the adjustment of our relations with our fellowmen, seeking the will of God in the realization of national and universal destiny, seeking to fulfill in all things, really and completely, that for which we pray when we say: "Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Without this virtue of confidence we cannot really work for the future at all. We are living in a most trying time of transition. The older order is passing away, a new order is approaching. The plans, the philosophies that men have sought to put into force have failed them and, as in the history of many an individual soul, so now the whole world is driven to the acceptance of the teachings of Christ if that world is to save itself. We are living in this time of transition, and we must live and work not because we can hope for a return of the peace that we once possessed, but because we can hope, by our efforts, to make that peace secure for the generation to come. In order to work to this end, we must be willing to suffer, to forego, and to sacrifice because only from the elements of sacrifice and endurance will lasting benefit to mankind be produced. Suffering can be borne, hope can be deferred, sacrifice can be made only if we are filled not only with the firm faith that there is a God above us, but with an absolute confidence in

His love for all His human children and His unfailing care over them. God will save the world. This we cannot doubt. In this firm trust is to be found the basic foundation for all our future hopes.

We have admired the generosity, the courage, and the efficiency displayed by those Catholics who practiced this virtue in the terrible time of war. We have admired the fearlessness, born of this virtue, which a great cardinal displayed and by which he saved a wavering people from dissolution and their country from annihilation. In resignation, in patience and in confidence they have shown us, in the face of the present crisis, where to look for leadership; where to find the justice that conquers wrong; where to turn in hope instead of despair. They have pointed out the Leader of leaders; "The government is on His shoulders and He shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the mighty, Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace" (Isaias ix. 6).

Could we but mount the skies and view the desolation of the battle-

scarred lands of Europe; could we but see the stretches of devastated and ruined country where death stalked and destruction ruled; could we but see the remnants of battered homes, the fields dead and sodden, the ways of traffic broken and barred, the homes of industry not only silenced but leveled to the ground; could we but behold with our physical vision this abomination of desolation, we could then understand the need of a material rebuilding in order that the fields might flower again, that the homes of men might rise again, that the factories might sing again, that peace and prosperity might live once more. We could then appreciate something of the joy that must come to the hearts of the returning inhabitants, despairing almost and yet triumphing over their despair, as they hear from other lands more fortunate, the message that announces the coming of material help: "Look up and lift up your heads because your redemption is at hand."

In the greater, broader world, we walk today amid the elements of a

more terrible catastrophe than that of material destruction. We are threatened with the storm-forces that would overwhelm civilization itself. We are threatened with a riot of materialism and selfishness that would destroy law and order and peace. We are face to face with an evil genius, brutal, terrible, diabolical, that hates religion, that disregards domestic sanctities, that subverts all personal morality and that would establish a rule of blood. And lo! we hear the far-coming voice, growing nearer and nearer: "Look up and lift up your heads because your redemption is at hand." We behold the form of Him Who has the government on His shoulders; we see Him Who has again and again kept strength in despairing peoples, Who lifted up the suffering and discouraged, Who infused life into the deadened heart, Who brought victory out of defeat. We behold Him Who is the one hope of mankind; "the Mightiest of the mighty, the Purest of the pure." The One Who speaks to all the world though that world may not heed; the

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One Who speaks to every one of us, to every one who cares, to every soul that harkens: "Would you give up hope? Would you yield to the darkness of despair? Would you lose confidence in My power, in My love, in My word? Ah! no. Turn to Me, come unto Me all you that labor and are burdened, cast your care on Me for I have care of you; have a great trust in My power and in My love; be faithful, steadfast, true, confident amid all trials, and in My strength you shall conquer."

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

OBEDIENCE

"Behold I send my angel before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before Thee."—Matt. xi. 10.

IBERTY," as Pope Leo XIII wrote in his encyclical on that subject, "is the greatest of man's **natural** gifts." The history of mankind is largely a history of the development of liberty. It was only by degrees that its full import could be realized and that its full stature could be reached. Time was needed to wear away the shackles that bound the hands and the minds of men. What existed as a germ in the martyr's appeal from mobs to conscience, and from man to God, required centuries for the attainment of its full growth. Our day is preëminently liberty's day and, whatever the shortcomings of the present

time may be, our day has been blessed, as no other, with the blessings of freedom.

Yet this greatest of natural gifts has been allowed to take on an unseemly and unreal form and to become, through processes of distortion and under false aspects, a most threatening danger to the structure of human society. It has, in our day, been carried to extremes. The fault of liberty just now is the fault of excess; and many, like those described by St. Peter, make liberty "a cloak for malice." Blind to the truth that there is no liberty without law, that there is no freedom without restraint, our age has developed as one of its chief characteristics a contempt for authority in any form.

In the sphere of religion, that most essential basis of all else, individualistic, subjective systems have gone so far as to raise this disregard for authority into the dignity of a virtue; and they have given birth to the monster of indifferentism. A false and exaggerated democracy, unlawful deduction from the good and the real,

has made it a virtue in politics; and has brought forth a riot of anarchy.

In the face of a prosperity that has enfranchised men and women, and sometimes even children, with economic independence, abuses have crept into the home, and before them family authority has collapsed.

There was a day when knowledge was power, when it possessed and exercised a dominant influence, but the universal diffusion of a merely superficial education has destroyed the authority of learning.

In a large measure world-wide standardization, and that on a very low plane, of fashions in drama, music, dress, social intercourse and recreation has robbed even virtue of its authority.

Yes, heaven itself has been assailed, for a tradition of easy conquest over the secrets and forces of nature has blinded men, the builders of the tower of Babel, to the authority of God Himself.

So great and general a perversion of right order cries to heaven for

vengeance. It is not too much to say that this is already upon us. The days of ancient Rome have suffered a rebirth, and the indictment of society of that time, as made by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, is no exaggerated charge against the world of the present. "Because that when they knew God they have not glorified Him as God or given thanks, but become vain in their thoughts, their foolish heart was darkened and God gave them up to the desires of their heart" (Romans i. 21-24).

The picture is a repulsive one. The Apostle describes the Romans as being "full of envy, murder, contention, deceit, malignity; whisperers, detractors, hateful to God, contumelious, proud, haughty, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, foolish, dissolute, without affection, without fidelity, without mercy. Who having known the justice of God did not understand that they who do such things are worthy of death; and not only they that do them, but they also that consent to them that do them."

If we but open our eyes to behold,

if we go out into the walks of life, into the low places and the high places, if we look for the realities about us, our investigations will convince us that the picture that the Apostle draws, describes only too accurately and honestly the social afflictions of our own age.

The disturbance in moral conditions finds its counterpart in civic and political matters, and even the thinkers and doers, who are interested principally in the temporal rather than the eternal welfare of man, tremble at the possible destruction of all safeguards of civil rights and true liberty at the hands of those who respect no authority whatsoever. And not only constitutional government, law, and order, are threatened, but also the very life of the race, since existing contempt for authority, if allowed a shade more of development, will bring on world-wide havoc and starvation. We who have felt but little of what other countries have so far suffered, may hesitate to accept this estimate, but, considering the world at large, we cannot escape the conviction that

our whole economic fabric cannot stand any further development of the spirit of disobedience to authority.

The way of man today is the way of disorder and turbulence and lawlessness. The way of God, now as always, is the way of order and peace and law. Of St. John it was said in prophecy: "Behold I send My angel before Thy face who shall prepare Thy way before Thee." And, in like manner may it be said of the Church of Christ. She is the angel sent by God to prepare the way of Christ. His way is the way of order and of law and that way is the way of *obedience.* To a world disrespectful and disregardful of law, the Church of God proclaims the remedy—a return to the recognition of rightful authority, a return to the virtue of obedience.

The Master shows the way to the disciple. Christ, our Lord, was Himself obedient in every respect. We must be obedient because Christ was obedient. He sought always to do the will of another. "Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not, but a body Thou has fitted to Me. Holocaust for

sin did not please Thee, then said I, behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of Me that I should do Thy will, O God." "He humbled Himself becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross." As a child, Jesus in the carpenter's home was "subject to them" who had authority on earth over Him. In His public life the mission He invariably carried out was "to do the will of Him that sent Me." In the instance of the coin of the tribute it is clear that He was obedient to the civil statutes. His whole teaching is instinct with the respect and obedience that must be yielded by man to the laws of State, the laws of Church and the laws of God. The perfect, the ideal man that He exemplifies and outlines is the obedient man.

Following the footsteps of their Lord, the Apostles enjoin the same virtue upon all Christians, upon all who would follow in the way of Christ. Read the second chapter of St. Peter's first Epistle and you will find a summary of the duties of obedience that are concerned with every

sphere of man's relationship with his fellowman, whether it be in the home, in the State, or in the Church.

Read the wonderful chapter thirteen of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans and you will find the most sacred written sanction of patriotism that has even been penned; you will find stated in the strongest, as well as the most beautiful language, the duties incumbent upon man as a citizen, of obedience to the laws of the State. Speaking explicitly of civil authority he says: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers: for there is no power but from God. Therefore, he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. And they that resisteth purchase to themselves damnation." And later he says—upon the same subject of respect for authority: "Render therefore to all men their duties. Tribute, to whom tribute is due: custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor."

That for which St. John the Baptist was the messenger, that which Christ the Saviour exemplified, that

which the Apostolic teachers, sent of Christ, insisted upon, is taught and fostered and practiced by the existing Church today.

Where, in all the world, is the respect for authority so real, so dignified, so strong, as in the Catholic Church? She declares that there is political liberty, and it means deliverance from unjust and harmful legislation; but it does not mean the absence of public laws nor the breaking down of all barriers of restraint.

There is liberty of conscience, and it means the removal of those obstacles which may hinder the fulfillment of the duties commanded by a voice which man cannot deny; but it does not mean the freedom of man to do as temptation or inclination may lead him.

There is liberty of thought, and it means the freedom and right to seek out, no matter in what sphere of knowledge, all truth, to weigh the evidence in its support, and, despite all opposition, to adhere to it; but it does not mean the fallacy of fallacies, that man may think as he pleases, or make

himself, and himself alone, the final court of decision.

Her practice is consistent with her theory. Today in her fold, over three hundred millions of people in every land under the sun give implicit obedience in faith and morals to divinely appointed pastors.

Today the best and ablest statesmen of our own beloved land consider the Catholic citizenship of America the very bulwark of established government against the inroads of anarchy.

Reverence for authority is the foundation of all true Catholic home-life, whence all graces of social intercourse have flowered and without which childhood is desolate.

In Catholic education alone can the mind today find that consistency and continuity on which certainty and precision depend; and this is because the authority of revelation protects and controls science.

Catholic priests and people protest vigorously against degenerate fashions and customs that have invaded society. Catholics honor virtue. The

veneration of the saints is a peculiarity of Catholics; and the veneration of the saints is the veneration of holiness, of virtue, which is rooted and founded in obedience.

The beauty and significance of all this is enhanced when we bring to mind the essential character of the virtue of obedience, and the divinity of its sanction.

Even in the earliest days of childhood, when the lesson of filial obedience is taught, the young mind is informed of the fundamental truth that the respect shown to parents is respect shown to God, for in the home the parents are representatives of divine authority.

So, too, in the State, obedience to those in authority is based not on any whim or exercise of arbitrary power, but upon the truth that those in office are, in the civil sphere, representatives of divine authority. He who rules may be appointed by man, he may be elected by the people, he may inherit his position, but the authority he exercises comes from Almighty God.

And thus, too, in the Church, if there is any authority it is because God has bestowed it. In the teachings that are taught, in the commands that are issued, teachings and commands that bind all, there is discerned and recognized that one thing which can call forth man's religious assent, the voice of Almighty God.

Thus in Catholic teachings, all obedience is obedience to God. Ultimately, obedience, even if it be yielded immediately to man, or State, or Church, takes on a sacred character because it is given unto God Himself.

Here then we have the second element so necessary for the upbuilding of a renewed human society. The first and most fundamental, *confidence* in God, must be followed up by *obedience* to God, for by this act, more than any other, the individual man proves his coöperation and manifests his confidence. There is within man a stupendous and an awful power, the power, namely, of resisting the will of God. What a terrifying power that is when one thinks of it, the power of

resisting the will of God. Only one greater and more stupendous power does man possess and that is the power of *doing* the will of God. To be able to resist the will of God is wonderful and stupendous; but to be able to do the will of God freely, this is more wonderful—more stupendous, more awful. The exercise of the one brings man's greatest shame—the exercise of the other brings man's greatest glory.

A new nation must be builded; a new life must be inaugurated; a new world must be established. We—you and I and every one of us, are called upon to be the builders. But "unless the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it" (Ps. cxxvi.). St. John was chosen of God as the messenger to prepare the way for the coming of Christ and he was chosen because he was a man of God, ready to do, glad to do, God's will. In all the history of mankind, God has chosen His children to be the instruments of His great work and, invari-

ably, He required one characteristic condition.

When in olden days the choice of God fell upon Samuel, and God wished to make him the Saviour of Israel, the call went forth again and again; and God was satisfied only when Samuel responded, in the spirit of absolute obedience: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

When God chose out the woman above all women to be the Mother of His Only-Begotten Son, the living coöperator in that greatest of all Divine and human mysteries, the Incarnation, heaven rejoiced, when, in the spirit of unquestioning obedience, Mary responded: "Be it done unto me according to Thy word!"

When God, in His search for one who would speak His gospel to the Gentile nations, struck down Saul on the road to Damascus, He imparted His mission only when the stricken Saul cried out in the submissive obedience of a converted heart, "Lord what wilt Thou have me to do?"

As nineteen centuries ago, so today the world, to be made anew, needs

the coming of the spirit of Him Who was obedient unto death. If we are to have a part in the remaking, if we would be builders not of Babel, not of confusion, but of enduring stability, then must we have the virtue that God requires of His messengers. If we would make our home the house of God, if we would make this nation the city of God, if we would make this world the Kingdom of God, then must we bend our heads and bow down our hearts, and loose our tongues in one protest of obedience: "Speak Lord, for Thy servant heareth." And, if the world, stricken down on the road of its mistaken progress, would be awakened to its best capabilities, then must it return to God in respect and obedience and genuinely ask: "Lord what wilt Thou have me to do?"

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

KNOWLEDGE

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord."—St. John i. 23.

F all the faults to which human nature is liable, the most insidious, the most subtle, and the most deadly is pride. One thing more than any other that is calculated to beget this deformity in man is unguided learning. High position, great wealth, extraordinary business ability, popularity, these indeed, may be causes of this vice in its cruder forms, but they do not compare, in enormity or consequences, with that form which is the result of an overwhelming estimate of one's mental acquirements—pride of intellect. A real danger, therefore, attached to the attainment of knowledge is that of creating in man an abnormal and inordinate sense of his

own sufficiency. He is liable to become contemptuous and critical of others and others' thoughts. He is filled with vanity and egotism, the world is bounded by his own mind and the measure of the universe is limited to his own understanding.

To him the great and fundamental facts of origin and destiny, of life and death, of this world and the hereafter, of man and of God are less than the vague and shadowy phantoms of some distant ghostland. Those truths which are spiritually so vital, which we know to be the greatest and the most necessary because they open the gates of eternal life and love, those truths which enter the heart and soul and form in the mold of Christ the one who humbly accepts them, these are hidden and lost behind the veil which pride draws before the eyes of the self-sufficient man. When we consider the immense powers of the human mind, the vast reaches over which it can extend, the unlimited and the unfathomed possibilities which lie before it, its actual discoveries and achievements; when, on the other

hand, we consider the subtle nature of pride and its power to capture the citadel of the soul without open attack, and the intellect that often succumbs without being aware that it is a victim, it does not seem so strange that man should forget God and be carried away by a sense of his own importance.

The gravity of this sin of pride is emphasized when we think how much easier it is to turn back to God any other offender than to awaken the proud man. Hundreds of those who have yielded to sins of weakness and passion repent before one victim of pride bows down his head and his heart. One of the greatest intellects that ever existed was that of the saint and doctor of the Church—Augustine. I venture to say that were we to question the multitude of men as to the sins for which this penitent sorrowed after the dawn of God's light, most of them would refer immediately to those evils, passions of heart and flesh which kept him enthralled during fifteen years of his earlier life. And, no doubt, in part, they would be correct;

for in the book of his *Confessions* it is very evident that Augustine looks back with the utmost horror, as well as the deepest contrition, upon those acts in which he disregarded morality and order, when the law of the flesh overcome the law of the spirit. Yet, serious as his offences in this line were, there was a more serious, because a more fundamental one; and there is nothing more apparent than this fact in that same revelation of himself given in his *Confessions*. The chief sin which he laments was his pride of intellect that so long caused him to reject the truth and to find seeming satisfaction in the limited conclusions of his own mind. More difficult was it to rid himself of pride of intellect than it was to banish the power of the flesh. The former was the miracle. It is far more wonderful to me that Augustine should be found in the ranks of the saints than that Mary Magdalene should be found there.

Before the days of his repentance, St. Augustine would probably have been found among those, who like

their descendants, have asserted in pride, that intellectual knowledge is the one thing to be desired and the only force capable of guiding man and securing the social and moral progress of humanity. Such has been the thesis of some in every time, but of a great number in the last few centuries. The scheme of knowledge without religion is primarily the invention of the intellectually proud. They have been led to assert, and their assertion has often found widespread adoption and execution, the all-sufficiency of education without religion. Yet the facts of life belie this contention. Education, of itself, never kept any one from sin. Knowledge never regenerated society. It has no moral power, unless back of it there is the inspiring force of religion. All efforts for the guidance of life that education may make, will come to naught unless they are connected with a great spiritual view of life as a whole. Heroic deeds for the welfare of others are not the monopoly of the educated. Sacrifices and sufferings, borne for conscience sake, are far more frequent

among the uneducated than among the highly enlightened. The avoidance of sin in any of its forms, is due rather to virtue than to knowledge. Faith in God and love of God, and purity, and honesty, and love of fellowman for the sake of God, things that do not depend upon high education, have done more and will do more for the good of the race and the advancement of humanity than all the knowledge in the world.

The whole moral structure of civilized society can be built only upon an education that is religious, because psychologically it is absolutely bound up with the demand that the spiritual man shall be stronger than his impulses. There are, of course, a number of arguments from reason against selfishness and passion, but, in most cases when pitted against the elemental forces of life, they are powerless. For the vast multitude of men, religion in its belief and practice is alone able to overcome the enticements of our life in the flesh.

I venture to say that there is hardly one who has not personal acquaint-

ance with concrete cases from real life that would prove the bankruptcy of education without religion as a moral force. One of the most noted University Professors of modern times, who had been a leader among the intellectuals, was awakened to emptiness of his teachings when his own son committed suicide and left a written message to the effect that he had done so in keeping with the principles his father had taught. "My philosophy," said the awakened professor, "has led to death. Therefore, it is wrong." And he turned to Him Who had said: *"This is eternal life; that they may know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent."*

Unfortunately, in the history of humanity during the past few centuries, the contention of the intellectuals that knowledge is everything has not remained in the sphere of the theoretical; nor has it been confined to the few. Rather it has been allowed to affect human society in a very practical and extensive way. Systems of education, founded upon this theory,

have had their sway and have exercised their influence upon the multitudes. The effects have been disastrous. Education which should point out the way of true life has led rather to death. Educators, so called, have wrought havoc among the people. "Their paths have become crooked to them and every one that treadeth in them, knoweth no peace." And over the centuries there comes the warning cry—from Isaias and John: "Make straight the way of the Lord."

Today when many who have retained some of the traditions of Christianity deplore, with ever-increasing frequency, the evil of education without religion, they are forced to realize that to remedy the situation is a gigantic task. They are not dealing with a stream near its headwaters, but with a vast estuary that opens upon the ocean, that is practically the ocean itself. Education, without religion, was attempted at the time of the renaissance which was the rebirth of those ideals which Christianity obliterated when paganism was conquered. In the sixteenth century,

a political, rather than an intellectual or religious movement, played into the hands of neo-paganism from the start by making culture a pawn of politics, first, by forcing the religion of the prince on his subject and later, through inevitable reaction, securing political peace by prohibiting all religious teaching in State schools. We find today governments explicitly dedicated to the extermination of religious instruction, and whole communities, even in this land of ours, saturated with information upon politics and kindred subjects, but totally ignorant of the essentials of religion.

"Make straight the way of the Lord." An evil so long seated and almost universal demands a remedy historically venerable and world-wide in action. Such is the Catholic Church whose original charter is the charter of a universal school: "Go, teach all nations." Consistently, invariably, in spite of all attacks from without, amid all the fashions of false philosophy, discredited science, ever-changing methods, and social reactions, she has maintained her position that the high-

est education is the education that embraces God and the soul and the will of man. Complete education, the education of mind and will and heart, the education in religion as well as in secular knowledge, has been the special solicitude of the Church from the day of Pentecost. Development of church organization included development of the school. It is invariably the next step after the erection of the altar in every mission field. It grows with the day of Catholic life in every community. Such was the case at Alexandria in the second century, in France under Charlemagne, in the New World from the universities founded at Lima and Mexico City in the sixteenth century to the growth of our own Catholic system of education in the United States in the twentieth century. In this vast and balanced system, philosophy and science are safeguarded and synthetized into a living organic whole by the vitalizing formative influence of that knowledge which is supreme, divine revelation; our methods are founded on the rock of heroic self-sacrifice in

the vocation and rule under which our teachers labor. Our social ideal is the charity of Christ, Who teaches us that all men are our brothers. Our morality is contained in the beatitudes that keep the heart set upon the Author of all wisdom.

The crooked paths must be made straight. We look for and pray for the regeneration of the whole world. It is God's world; and in God alone is our hope. Our confidence for the good outcome rests in God; our obedience to authority, without which no society can endure, is obedience to God; our education must be education that leads to God.

"Make straight the way of the Lord." It was the Lord Himself Who said: *"I am the way."* Life means naught unless it has an eternal goal; progress means naught unless it means progress towards God; Knowledge means naught unless it points out the way of progress and life. Forever the standard is set: "This is eternal life; that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent."

If we put our hand in the hand of Christ and let Him be our Guide, then shall we walk the true way. He will touch with divinity every bit of knowledge that we attain, natural and supernatural. He will show us God in every creature, in everything that lives, in the ocean and the heavens, in the stars of the sky, in genius amongst men, in the history of the races of mankind, in the wonderful triumphs of human intellect, in the humblest and lowliest of humanity, in every study that we can imagine, but above all, He will show us the knowledge that is supreme, the knowledge that enriches the soul, that strengthens the will, that warms the heart with that one greatest gift that is of value here, that one greatest motive that can guide us, and that one greatest grace that will shine luminous against the sky of eternity and burn forever in the furnace of our heart, the *Love of our God.*

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

PIETY

"And the crooked shall be made straight."—Luke iii. 5.

HE prosperity of the old Roman State, especially in the days of the Republic, was due largely to the extraordinary realization—extraordinary when we remember it was built upon merely natural foundations—of the necessity and nobility of family virtue. Never has there been a clearer understanding of the relationship between parent and child, never a greater consciousness of the duties and responsibilities resulting from this relationship, than were found in the homes of the Romans.

It was only when evils were permitted to invade the family, only when the vices that led to divorce and accompanied it that divorce itself was allowed to obtain a foothold; only when

the moral plagues, such as Juvenal describes, polluted the hearths of the people, that the greatest bulwark of Rome was destroyed, and Rome herself began to disintegrate. For with the decay of the home and with the disregard of the family, Rome lost that prop upon the strength of which, in theory and in practice, the very life of the State rested. The nobility of the home meant the stability of the Republic; the decay of the home meant the dying of the nation.

To this exceptional regard for the family, to this home-virtue, this devotion of parent to child, of child to parent, of kin to kin, the Romans gave a distinct and definite name, and that name was "*pietas*," *piety*. The word has taken on, in the course of ages, other and wider meanings. It has been used, in the slightly changed form of *pity* to signify the compassion that we feel for those who suffer; it has been used at times for that devotion which we feel and show for country; and it has been brought, in its highest application, to mean in general, the sum of devotion and loyalty of the soul to

God and religion. The warmest expressions of our relationships with our fellowmen, with our country and even with our God are couched in the language of the family. We are *brothers* to our neighbors, we are *sons* and *daughters* of our country, we are the *children* of God.

It is in the more original, fundamental and Roman sense that we use the word here as expressing a family-virtue, a virtue that embodies the rights, the duties, the responsibilities of home-life, especially as necessary to the well-being of the great body of mankind.

It has been said—and rightly said—that the family is a miniature society. This appears when we study the structure of the social body and find that the cells of that organism are the families that go to compose the State. But it appears also, with moral weight and significance, when we consider the home as a school wherein are taught and developed those very virtues that are most necessary for the well-being of all mankind. It is in the home, under the guidance and in-

struction of parents, that the child first learns the fundamental need of *submission* and *discipline* and *knowledge,* elements that we have seen to be socially essential always, and to be particularly essential now, if the world is to be rebuilt, if the crooked ways of the time are to be made straight. And when the child has attained to maturity, has, in its turn, founded a new family, then does the young man or young woman learn, as it could not otherwise be learned, the full lesson of *responsibility.* Face to face with the necessity of caring for others, of obtaining food and clothing and shelter; compelled to hearken to the mysterious appeal that comes from the living soul within the body claiming spiritual as well as material response, the founders of a new home are constantly reminded of their duty and their accountability, the two things without which the existence of society is impossible, nay unthinkable. Thus is the home the greatest of educators for social life, the most necessary school and the most wonderful influence.

Any attack upon the home, therefore, is an attack upon society. Anything that would remove man's sacred conception of the family, would remove likewise the firmest prop of the State. No society can hope to be strong if the family be weak—even as no man can hope to be strong if he be afflicted with a weak heart.

Of all the pathetic sights which the world has recently witnessed in the devastated areas of Europe, none probably could surpass that of the return of men and women and children to the ruined villages, carrying or drawing what little of their belongings remained to them, looking for their homes. In thus returning, they but obeyed one of the most fundamental of human instincts. Their search was in answer to the natural cry of their broken hearts. Instinctively they knew that if their country was to prosper, if it was to regain the sunlight of peaceful success, the homes of the people must be reëstablished. The greatest incentive that urged their men to battle was the defence of their homes. The greatest outrage commit-

ted upon them was the invasion of their homes and families. And the greatest restoration was to come through the reëstablishment of their homes.

Perhaps less palpable, certainly more insidious, and just as certainly more ruinous, have been the forces that society has permitted and encouraged to invade the home in times of peace. Today in some parts of the world the attack upon the social body has become acute; and we witness as its accompaniment, almost as its preliminary, a concerted attack upon the unit of society, the family. That enemy of the State is wise at least who would begin his work of destruction by breaking down the sacred restraints of family virtue and by abolishing family rights and duties.

The more intelligent citizens in our country today stand aghast before some of the facts and legislation that come to us from lands overriden with revolution, but those same people blind themselves to the truth that for a long time our own society has harbored and nourished the same viper within its own breast.

Could there be any attacks upon the home more pernicious than those which in recent years have been permitted in the civilized society of our own land? The unblushing advocacy of the sinful restriction of the family; the egotistic, selfish disruption of the family in the widespread approval and prevalency of divorce; the lessening, in all spheres of life, of the sense of those two things which find their highest exemplification in the home and which are, at the same time, most essential to social life, duty and responsibility; these evils, perhaps more than any others, have gradually eaten into the very heart and inevitably, therefore, have weakened the whole body of society.

One of the noblest tasks in which we are called upon to help at the present time is the reëstablishment of the material edifices that have been destroyed, the rebuilding of the battered centres of the deepest human emotions and the most necessary of human institutions.

But this, no matter how generous and extensive, would be as naught un-

less, in the greater rebuilding of society, right principles be revived, the sense of responsibility be deepened and the requirements of duty be recognized in connection with the home, in a word, unless that family virtue of piety, vigorous and tender, be permitted to regain ascendancy.

We have ventured to suggest thus far three virtues of supernatural foundation that are required for the good health of humanity, *confidence in God; obedience to God; knowledge of God.* And we have seen how these shine forth brilliantly in the faith that is Catholic, in the Church of Jesus Christ. If it is plain that these are found in their fullest measure within the Catholic Fold, it is still plainer and clearer that no institution, no philosophy, no religion so safeguards the family as the Catholic Church; and that, above all, there is none other that strengthens the natural dignity of the home with a supernatural foundation.

Where, today, do we find so explicitly taught and so strongly enforced the social virtues of true and

right submission and of lawful obedience, as in the Catholic family? Where, today, do we find the beginnings of true wisdom and education so clearly outlined as in the habits developed within the Catholic home? Where, today, do we find so expressly taught the plain and unequivocal doctrine of the sacredness of human life as in the Catholic Church? Where do we find the unflinching protest, based upon moral principles, against the disintegrating and immoral practices connected with the sinful restriction of family, except in the Catholic Church? Where do we find the evil of divorce not only fully recognized as evil, but also absolutely opposed, except in the Catholic Church? Where do we find the high character of marriage fully defended; where do we find in regard to this relationship, even the heroic insisted upon, the supremacy of the spiritual over the physical maintained, the unselfish regard for the good of the race over the pleasure of the individual advocated, except in the Catholic Church? Where do we find this fundamental

institution of life, so ennobled, so elevated, so transformed as to be found amongst God's supernatural gifts to man, alive with sacramental grace, raised to that spiritual plane where it can be likened unto Christ's union with His Church and the union of the soul with God—except in the Catholic Church?

Were there no other reason of the many that betoken the divinity of the Catholic Church, this one alone should bid the mind of man pause and consider her claims—her teachings as to that basic relationship which is the foundation of home—marriage.

To the whole world we may cry out: Oh! wake up and see—open thine eyes and behold—must not "the valley be filled—and every mountain and hill be brought low—and the crooked made straight and the rough ways plain"—if the road of the Lord is to be apparent? If men would cease to be hypocrites; if they would but honestly seek the truth; if they would but sincerely desire the best interests of humanity, would they not then admit that only the Catholic idea

of the home can bring health to human society? They would understand that pride, and vice, and selfishness, and luxury and all that prevents the coming of God, must be eliminated before the unit of social life, the family, can be clothed with the strength and the stability which are essential to human welfare.

We may erect what is apparently a splendid building; we may admire its proportions, its magnitude, its architectural beauty, but what a flimsy thing it would all be if the foundations were not strong and secure? It would be like a palace of ice that melts away in the sun, or like a house of paper that the attacks of the weather destroy. Civilization and culture and comfort have combined to make of our modern home an apparently attractive institution, but, in times of stress and storm, these elements are unable to withstand attack unless underneath them all is the strong virtues of family piety, born of God and sanctified by God.

Before the eyes of the body and of the soul, the Church ever holds as the

picture of the perfect, ideal family, the home of Nazareth, where Mary and Joseph and Jesus lived together in the sweet harmony of mutual love. She constantly invites her children to look upon this Holy Group and to learn from them the affection and the obedience and the faith that merge into security and holiness. The Catholic woman, approaching the sacred dignity of motherhood, contemplates that picture and, all unconsciously, bequeaths to the yet unborn child something of the virtue that springs from the heart of the Blessed Mother and the Holy Child.

That picture, too, with all that it contains, is placed before the world. If the world turn its eyes away and refuse to be guided by what the picture teaches, then surely shall the world again fail. If the world accepts the lesson and reëstablishes the homes of its people upon the strong foundation of right and sacred principles, then shall it be truly remade, reformed in that mold in which are formed the best citizens of a country and the best citizens of heaven.

CHRISTMAS DAY

FRATERNITY

"As many as received Him, He gave them power to be made the Sons of God." —John i. 12.

E all love a little child. In such there is something that touches even the most hardened. With mingled feelings of joy and sorrow we are drawn to give our affection. The innocence peering through the eyes like the gentleness of the morning light; the soul that thus speaks to us, the soul without stain, white as the driven snow; the lips that prattle in the language of angels and that ripple with laughter like the opening of violets in spring; the affection that is purest of the pure; the confidence and trust that win our unworthy hearts, these, indeed, are things of heaven. How the mother will cherish every reminder left to her if the Angel of Death has taken away her child.

The toys, the trinkets, the little books and treasures, all are wedded to her soul and bedewed with the holy tears of love, sacred affection called forth by a little child. Today is the Feast of the Divine Child.

Today, we kneel in adoration before the crib of Bethlehem. Today the millions of Christian hearts throughout the world, animated by a sympathy and love for a little Child, love which strikes forth music from the tenderest chords of human nature, turn back through the centuries and place their willing tribute at the feet of Him Who holds them captive.

As we gaze, world-voices cease and Heaven's hymn rings in our souls: "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." We are carried back unto that holy night and blessed morn, when earth's greatest visitor appeared among men. The time of promise had come; prophecy had fulfilled its days; the seventy weeks of years had elapsed; the gates of heaven were opened and legions of celestial choristers awoke the world with "good tidings of great joy."

The immortal song has echoed without ceasing from that day unto this; and as it called the shepherds on the first Christmas morning to kneel in adoration before the little Child in Bethlehem's stable, so today to our listening souls it sounds and, as little children, we are led captive by its charm before the helpless King, the Child Divine. But as we gaze, as we adore, as we love, rejoicing in our great joy because a Child is born to us, a Son is given to us, we must not forget the stupendous meaning of this wonderful mystery today manifested to the world—this truth that contains the healing for a suffering world.

To mankind, Christ comes as a *brother.* It is the desire of One Who is flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone to be our Brother that is expressed in the Incarnation. The world had known God as a Father. He now comes as a Brother. From the time when man began to exist, in the creation itself and in the preservation of all things, God had shown man His love. Always did He love His creatures, especially those in whom was

the image of Himself. But man failed to see this or to understand it fully. To make this love palpable and manifest, God comes now clothed in the garb of a human body and a human soul. He is of the very race and blood of man. Could He come to us under a more powerful title of kinship? Could He more strongly express the desire of His heart for man? Whatever the false conceptions of the Incarnation in the minds of erring men, they all lose significance when they question the true union of the Godhead and manhood in Christ Jesus. For only in that conception do we find alike the condescension of God and the elevation of man; only in that do we see realized the sacred basis of the relationship of brotherhood among men.

The members of the human race, unconsciously grasping for the ideal, as the ages have progressed, have shown at times a very passion for brotherhood. But because their idea of fraternity has been devoid of the divine and supernatural, the passion has been futile and fraternity has been fleeting and elusive. Many have been

the attempts of humanity to establish this relationship among men; but how vain have been the results. Common industry is often employed as the basis of fraternity, but when there is no stronger bond, that fraternity is not only very limited, but it overflows into pure and unadulterated selfishness. Politics begets a kind of fraternity between men, but how well we know that this fraternity frequently overflows into a narrowness that arouses deep and lasting hatred. Philanthropy creates a bond of fraternity between many, but experience teaches that this fraternity in its exclusiveness develops a blindness that hides the spiritual values of life. Economic interests are employed as a basis of fraternity, but, with men and nations, this generally overflows into an avarice that of necessity kills the idea of true brotherhood. National affiliation likewise serves as a bond of fraternity, but it often overflows into injustice, and, at any rate, falls far short of that universality which must be a note in any enduring communion among men.

Fraternity! It was one of the very watchwords of the French Revolution and countless lives were offered before its shrine. But what did the effort amount to? There was less fraternity after, than before the conflict. The same distinctions held; the same classes existed; the same wrongs continued; the same injustices lived on, because fraternity had been only a word and lacked the vitality that only a sacred foundation and a pure motive could give.

At a time when a boastful world had thought that it had attained a state of solidarity unsurpassed; when in the academic sphere, brotherhood was preached, and taught, and intellectually accepted; when men said that at last the dream of the ages had been realized and love for fellowman reigned over the earth in that all men looked upon all others as their brothers, the bautiful dream was rudely interrupted by a clash of arms that involved the world.

During that war itself how we thought that we had learned what fraternity meant. How, when the

need of the country called; we worked together and put aside all distinctions; how, when the world called, whole nations coöperated in a union more embracing and extensive than ever before—how we then thought that fraternity was about to be realized as a practically universal condition. Has that spirit truly lived? Rather has it not failed ignominously? Has it proven strong enough to beget in our hearts real forgiveness of our enemies? Has it proven strong enough to enable us to pray: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us?" Has it proven strong enough to induce the mighty to deal out justice to all the peoples of the earth? Has it proven strong enough to establish a living friendship between nations? Has it proven strong enough to compel men to recognize the rights of all and to act without thought of avarice and selfishness, and material gain?

It has all proven short-lived and unavailing because it has not allowed itself to be vitalized and spiritualized; because it has failed to learn the hu-

man lesson of that Divine Fact, the Incarnation.

Yet that lesson has been taught and has been learned in one place—in that Church which is the very continuation upon earth of the Incarnation itself. If the world would only see and understand, it would find that within that Church there has ever existed true and real fraternity—a fraternity centred in our Divine Brother, Christ, and receiving from Him that life which none other can give to it. Throughout all that Church's history, in her customs, privileges, worship and devotions, there has been no distinction of classes. Poverty of resources or lowliness of life, has never been an obstacle to advancement. The cobbler and the beggar and the peasant have attained to the Throne of the Fisherman. The high and the lowly, the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, all can be found in the long list of her canonized saints.

In the earliest days of Christianity while in the imperial city above, the old pagan distinctions between classes,

between the bondsmen and the free, maintained, in the catacombs beneath, senator and slave, Jew and Gentile, Greek and Roman, knelt side by side, worshipped together, received their Lord together in a fraternity that was then new to the world. In the Middle Ages, the ages of the great cathedrals, themselves the products not of great wealth but of a true brotherhood of labor, noblemen and peasants, the richest and the poorest, approached the altar rail together to share in the Eucharistic banquet of fraternity and knew that no distinction could break the bond of this human and divine relationship.

And the same is true today. If last night you visited this Cathedral or any other Catholic Church in this great Metropolis—what did you see? You saw crowds of people of all stations of life, of all degrees of learning, of all occupations, side by side, crowding around the confessionals in the brotherhood of penitents to beg the mercy of their Divine Brother, Jesus Christ. And this morning, were you here or in any other Church, you saw

multitudes, thousands of people of all walks in life, coming, as their brethren of the catacombs, as their brethren of the Mediæval Cathedrals, united by an invisible bond of true fraternity. For they came to the altar of God in virtue of the living Christ within them, as the poor shepherds of the hills and the rich kings of the East came to the crib of Bethlehem.

This is a real exemplification of the spirit of brotherhood which Jesus Christ preached and lived; this is the fruit of the spirit that shines forth in the Sermon on the Mount, yea, throughout the gospels, and in the letters of the beloved disciple, John; this is the every day evidence of the spirit of Bethlehem, a fraternity "that is born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but *of God*."

In other words, we are brothers one of another just in so far as we are the brothers of Christ. He is the Divine Fact, the Divine Person, the Divine Link between soul and soul. Every attempt of the world to establish a fraternity without Him as its

foundation, is but an excrescence that has not root within. True fraternity is a flower springing from the root which is Christ. Through Him alone can we become the sons of God. "As many as received Him He gave them the power to be made the sons of God." And only the sons of God can be *brothers* indeed.

Men are right today when they assert that any rebirth or rebuilding of the world must be upon the basis of fraternity. Other elements of reconstruction are necessary. Reliance upon God, that means loyalty to Him, true discipline of life that means obedience to Him; right knowledge that means, above all, knowledge of God; respect for the family, the God-established unit of society; all these are necessary—but all these, as far as they have social effects, are as naught without fraternity. No fraternity, however, short of universal, will avail; and no fraternity can be universal unless it be likewise Divine—unless every man be fraternally related to his fellowman because both are related in brotherhood to Jesus

Christ. In Him and in Him alone lies the secret of the world's health and life. If, on the one hand, His coming unto earth means the act of the perfect God bending down and living and suffering and dying for the redemption of mankind; it means, on the other hand, the lifting up of all men through the perfect Man to a plane where, if humanity will, hatreds and differences and conflicts and wrongs may cease to be and where all may be at peace.

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